



# Department of Justice

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## **FORMER HOME HEALTH CARE COMPANY OWNER PLEADS GUILTY TO SUBMITTING 4,800 FALSE CLAIMS TO GOVERNMENT INSURANCE PROGRAMS**

COLUMBUS – Melee Il Kermue, age 32, of Columbus pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. Kermue admitted that between July 2002 and October 2004, he was part of a conspiracy that submitted approximately 4,800 fraudulent claims for \$272,525.50 to the Ohio Medicaid program for services that were never provided.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Ohio Attorney General Nancy H. Rogers, and members of the Southern Ohio Health Care Fraud Task Force announced the plea entered today before United States District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

Kermue was the owner, chief executive officer and registered agent for Hope Home Health Care, Inc. in Reynoldsburg. Hope was a home health agency that provided skilled nursing services to Medicaid patients from the patients' homes. The nursing services included monitoring a patients vital signs and administering medications. Hope also provided daily living services, such as cleaning the patient's home and bathing the patients.

Kermue admitted submitting claims to Medicaid that included fictitious times and dates of services, and submitting claims for services delivered in patients' homes when in fact the patients were hospitalized at the time.

Kermue and co-defendant Wilma Bailey were indicted in September, 2005 and were arrested after they fled to their native country of Liberia. Bailey returned in 2007. Kermue was returned to the country in August, 2008.

Bailey pleaded guilty in January 2008 to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and was sentenced on August 8, 2008 to 12 months imprisonment. She was ordered to pay restitution to the Medicaid program in the amount of \$272,525.50.

Kermue faces a sentence of up to five years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000 in addition to restitution. Judge Sargus will set a date for sentencing. He will remain in custody pending sentencing.

Medicaid, established by Congress in 1965, provides medical insurance coverage for individuals whose incomes are too low to meet the costs of necessary medical services. Approximately 60% of the funding for Ohio's Medicaid program comes from the federal government.

Task Force agencies participating in the investigation include the Ohio Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit; the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, the Columbus Police Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Lockhart commended the investigation by Task Force Agents and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth Affeldt, who prosecuted the case.

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